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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE

To: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: Command History (OPNAV Report 5750-1)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) CARAEWRON 121 (VAW-121) Squadron History 1979

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded.

T. S. ESEMAN
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I. COMMAND ORGANIZATION

a. Squadron Evolution

1. The history of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE (VAW-121) began in the years immediately following World War II. An experimental squadron was established in December 1946 utilizing the Grumman "AVENGER" with an attached radome. This aircraft was soon replaced by the Airborne Early Warning (AEW) version of the Douglas "SKYRAIDER". The "SKYRAIDER" was the primary AEW aircraft in July 1958 when the rudimentary AEW forces in the fleet were consolidated into two squadrons, VAW-1 and VAW-2 located on the west coast and the east coast respectively. VAW-2 originally based at Norfolk, Virginia was soon relocated to Quonset Point, Rhode Island as Composite Squadron Twelve (VC-12). A basic organization of one parent squadron with numerous detachments operating aboard east coast carriers was established. The squadron continued to operate the "SKYRAIDER" until January 1960 when the first WF-2 "TRACER" (WILLY FUDD) was introduced to the squadron, now redesignated VAW-12. The squadron moved to Norfolk in 1962 where it continued to grow. In 1966, the first E-2A HAWKEYE arrived and it became apparent that with two different aircraft, the HAWKEYE and the WILLY FUDD (redesignated E-1B), in addition to over one thousand officers and men, VAW-12 had simply grown too large. Consequently, in April 1967 Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing TWELVE was established, with overall command of east coast E-1 aircraft. Separate E-2 squadrons and a separate training squadron were also established.

2. VAW-121 continued to operate the E-1B with detachments aboard anti-submarine and attack carriers until July 1973, when they disestablished their last "Det" and formed a single squadron operating exclusively off the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CV-42). In July 1975, VAW-121 commenced transition to the E-2C and flew its last E-1B into retirement. It became the first fleet squadron to receive the new Advanced Radar Processing System (ARPS) version of the aircraft with which it deployed in January 1978 aboard USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN-69). The deployment was the squadron's first as an E-2 HAWKEYE squadron and marked its initial entry into Carrier Air Wing SEVEN as a permanent member. January 1979 marked the start of VAW-121's first extended Mediterranean deployment since receiving the E-2C.

3. The Commanding Officer of CARAEWRON ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE from November of 1977 to February 1979 was Commander David E. BEYMAN, with Commander Andrew J. MURPHY as the Executive Officer. Commander MURPHY assumed command of the squadron on 22 February 1979 and the responsibility of Executive Officer was given to Commander Jay W. SPRAGUE. Under the leadership of these men, the squadron has been strengthening an enviable reputation for professionalism and performance.

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II. SUMMARY OF OPERATIONSa. CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1. 16 January found VAW-121 deploying aboard the USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN-69), with four E-2C ARPS aircraft, as a integral member of Carrier Air Wing SEVEN (CVW-7). The transit was marked by rough seas and attendant deck motion of up to 15 degrees. Despite this, the "BLUETAILS" flew every day but one in preparation for their incho to the Med.

Major exercises during the January thru July deployment were as follows:

a) 31 January through 4 February: ASW Week in the western Mediterranean basin. Commencing shortly after IKE's incho, this exercise had VAW-121 flying in day and night operations. Daylight hours found the E-2C working in support of TACCAIR missions while night operations were centered about the "Hummer, Hoover, Helo" Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) trio with the E-2C as a most invaluable member of the team. The exercise provided tremendous Surface, Sub-Surface Coordination (SSSC) training to the "BLUETAIL" Crews in an intense SSSC environment.

b) 15 February: SINKEK in the Ionian Sea. Controlling both the surface Battle Group and CVW-7 air units, as both alternated attacks on the target ship, the exercise provided excellent Command, Control, and Communication (C³) and War-at-Sea (WAS) training for the squadron's air crews. After several constructive WAS periods and live surface to surface gunnery periods against the target, it was successfully sunk by CVW-7 assets.

c) 25 February - 4 March: NATIONAL WEEK XXVI in the central Mediterranean Sea. The objectives of NATWK XXVI were to sortie an amphibious assault group from Taranto Bay, Italy, transit the Straits of Sicily "choke point", and land amphibious assault forces ashore in southern Sardinia (Capo Teulada). USS SARATOGA (CV-60), a co-participant with IKE, was tasked with primary task force air defense while the IKE was tasked with primary sea control. IKE proceeded ahead of the major body to detect and "destroy" ORANGE surface/sub-surface units. After a successful transit of the Straits of Sicily, IKE loitered east of Sardinia and moderate density ORANGE air raids began. DACT under E-2 control was emphasized and aggressive prosecution of ORANGE units, both surface and subsurface, continued.

d) 3-5 April: DATEX and FLEXGOLD strikes into France and Germany. These strikes afforded the IKE's Air Wing the opportunity to train for intermediate and long range interdiction. These two exercises provided unique challenges to the "BLUETAILS" for coordinating flight clearances for tactical Aircraft through French and German airspace.

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e) 4-13 May: Israeli Regional Air Weapons Training Exercise (WTEX) in connection with the IKE and SOUTH CAROLINA's (CGN-37) port visit to Haifa, Israel. RADM Robert F. SHOULTZ, Commander Battle Force SIXTH Fleet, and CAPT J. H. MAULDIN, Commanding Officer, USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN-69), hosted a "Day at Sea" on 10 May for approximately 900 distinguished Israeli government officials, senior military, the Diplomatic Corps, and citizens. Among the distinguished visitors were Israeli President Yitzhak Navon, Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Deputy Prime Minister Yigael Yadin, Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, U. S. Ambassador to Israel, the Honorable Samuel L. Lewis, and numerous members of the Israeli Knesset. The highlight of the day's activities was an Air Weapons Training Exercise by CVW-7.

The Haifa, Israel port visit also afforded the squadron an opportunity for exchange program with the Israeli Air Force E-2C (ARPS) HAWKEYE squadron based at Hazerim Air Force Base in the Negev Desert. Approximately 30 members of the IAF E-2C squadron were hosted aboard IKE by VAW-121 on 7 May for operational/organizational familiarization briefings and tours. On 9 May, the IAF flew 30 VAW-121 personnel to Hazerim for a look at Israeli Hawkeye operations. The frank discussions and exchanging of ideas between the two squadrons were highlights of the visit.

f) 17 - 24 May: DAWN PATROL 79; a three phase, eight nation NATO exercise conducted in the Ionian Sea involving both power projection and war-at-sea scenarios using Avgo Nisi as the simulated target, provided the E-2C crews with invaluable exposure to the planning and execution of strike warfare. Phase II (17-19 May). This portion of the exercise was highlighted by the Dissimilar Air Combat Tactics (DACT) AIC training received while controlling IKE's F-14's against Air Force F-15's. Due to USAF regulations that require a USAF controller to control USAF DACT assets and that he be co-located with the Navy controller, First Lieutenant Mack McKinney from the 601st Tactical Control Wing (TCW) flew with the E-2C crew. This provided invaluable cross-training and exposure to the Air Force procedures and tactics. With only one USAF controller aboard IKE from the 601st TCW, the flexibility of having CAPT AYER, the squadron's newest CICO and the USAF's first E-2C CICO was extremely helpful in providing the necessary USAF F-15 control. Phase III (20-24 May). This portion of the exercise proved most fruitful for all VAW-121 aircrews and extremely successful for the Battle Force. The total reliance of the Battle Force Commander on dual E-2C coverage, except single coverage at night, and on the E-2C CICO as his "Airborne TAO" was graphically demonstrated by this exercise. Operating in total EMCON during this phase of the Exercise, the Task Force received its tactical information from the two airborne "BLUETAIL" E-2C's. One was responsible for maintaining the force SSSC posture, directing War-at-Sea strikes against ORANGE surface units, and coordinating ASW search operations. The second E-2C was responsible for force Anti-Air Warfare. Each aircraft acted as an airborne TAO for its respective mission area. Lastly, a successful SAR evolution for the crew of an F-14A provided valuable live exposure to SAR coordination procedures for the airborne E-2C crew.

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g) 23 - 24 June: During IKE's last in port period in the Mediterranean prior to outchop, five "BLUETAIL" aircrewmembers flew an E-2C ARPS HAWKEYE to the Royal Air Force Base Greenham Common, Newbury Berkshire, England to participate in International Air-Tatto 79. The event was the largest air display ever to be staged in the United Kingdom.

2. The end of July and the first few weeks of August found the BLUETAILS back in NORFOLK in their post deployment stand-down, and enjoying a well deserved rest after a highly successful deployment. There was an abundance of awards earned by squadron personnel which exemplifies the squadron's performance in their first major deployment since transitioning to the E-2C. Awards included:

3 Navy Commendation Medals
4 Navy Achievement Medals
21 CTF-60 Letters of Commendation

Pilot proficiency was also outstanding with a landing grade average of 3.42 and placed three individuals in the top ten pilots in CVW-7:

4th	LT	[REDACTED]	3.73
6th	LCDR	[REDACTED]	3.69
7th	CDR	[REDACTED]	3.67

The NFO's also performed outstandingly, logging over 2100 intercepts for the deployment period.

3. 10 - 19 October: Weapons Detachment to Roosevelt Roads as a part of a CVW-7 opposition force for the FORRESTAL/CVW-1 ORE. This was the squadron's first integrated operation with CVW-7 since returning from deployment and provided excellent Airwing indoctrination training for the new crewmembers.

4. 6 - 8 November: SEA BAT 1-80 off the Virginia Capes. This exercise afforded an excellent opportunity for operation in a multiple jamming environment. Up to three dedicated, simultaneous jammers operated against the APS-125 providing valuable crew ECM training and further evaluation of ARPS performance.

5. 26 November to 8 December: Red FLAG 1-80 and integrated Air Wing training at Fallon, Nevada. Flying 44 sorties and 106 hours in support of Red Flag, primary emphasis was on strike control and air threat warning in the Fallon Operating Area, combat SAR's were practiced with an actual SAR occurring involving the rescue of the crew of a downed UH-1

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7. 1979 was an extremely successful year for VAW-121. Winning the 1978-1979 Commander Naval Air Force U. S. Atlantic Fleet Battle Efficiency "E" for East Coast VAW squadrons shows just how well the squadron performed in all areas. Also during 1979, VAW-121 surpassed the 13 year mark for accident free flying, receiving the Commander Naval Air Force U. S. Atlantic Fleet Accident Free Flight Award. The Squadron has amassed 65,000 flight hours in achieving this safety plateau.

b. Statistical Summary

1. Combat Readiness

a) Flight hours

- 1 Total flight hours granted: 2530
- 2 Total flight hours flown: 2530
- 3 Total Embarked hours: 1774 (70%)
 - (a) Day: 1307
 - (b) Night: 467

b) Ship landings

- 1 Total carrier arrested landings: 505
 - (a) Day: 335
 - (b) Night: 170
- 2 Overall boarding rate: 95.8%
 - (a) Day: 95.9%
 - (b) Night: 94.4%

2. Weapons System Readiness

a) Aircraft availability:

- 1 Full Systems Capable (FSC) rate: 43.6%
- 2 Operation ready rate: 70.4%

b) Cannibalization rate per 100 flight hours: 17.2%

c) A799 rate: 2.16%

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d) Material condition: Precruise Corrosion Inspection

1 Pre-deployment Corrosion Inspection: SAT

2 Mid-deployment Corrosion Inspection: SAT

3 Post-deployment Corrosion Inspection: SAT

3. Aviation Safety

a) Total continuous hours accident free: 64,800

b) Major accidents: None

c) Minor accidents: None

d) Ground accidents: None

e) Unsatisfactory report incidents: 42

f) NATOPS changes: 20

4. Personnel Readiness

a) Retention rate:

1 Officers: one officer resignation

2 Enlisted:

(a) First tour: 39%

(b) Second tour: 67%

(c) Career: 43%

b) Advancement (Enlisted)

1 Number eligible: 104

2 Number advanced: 57

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